DIVINE MERCY,

THE

REFUGE OF SINNERS IN DISTRESS:

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT

THE FUNERAL

Of the late Mrs. LITTLEWOOD, Rochdale,

MAY 28, 1799,

BY JOHN FAWCETT, A. M.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

An ADDRESS at the INTERMENT,

BY JOHN HINDLE.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.

His Mercy endureth for ever. DAVID.

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DISCOURSE

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RELIANCE OF SINNERS IN DISTRESS

ON THE

DIVINE MERCY

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THE

REFUGE OF SINNERS IN DISTRESS.

PSALM lvii. 1.

BE MERCIFUL UNTO ME, O GOD, BE MERCIFUL UNTO ME; FOR MY SOUL TRUSTETH IN THEE; YEA, IN THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS WILL I MAKE MY REFUGE, UNTIL THESE CALAMITIES BE OVERPAST.

HOW ſolemn, how awful is the ſcene now before us! We ſee here the Miſtreſs of a very large family followed to her long home, by thoſe who were the objects of her care and ſolicitude. We ſee here the remains of the affectionate Wife, taken away from the partner of her boſom in the midſt of her days, when her aſſiſtance was moſt needful. We have be-

A fore

AS the author had written no part of this diſcourſe, with a view to publication, before the delivery of it, his recollection may poſſibly have failed him in ſome inſtances. He therefore hopes that any ſlight variation, in point of phraſe, or the inſertion of, perhaps, here and there a new thought, will be candidly excuſed by thoſe who heard it from the pulpit.

fore us the coffin and the grave of the tender Mother of many children, ſix of whom ſurvive their deceaſed parent; ſuch of them as are ſenſible of their loſs affect our hearts with their cries and lamentations, while the others, yet in a ſtate of helpleſs infancy, are ſtill more, if poſſible, the objects of commiſeration. The numerous and reſpectable audience, aſſembled on this mournful occaſion, is a public teſtimony of regard for the memory of the deceaſed, and of ſympathy with the afflicted family in which this affecting breach is made. The wiſe man juſtly obſerves, that "It is better to go to the houſe of mourning, than to go to the houſe of feaſting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart." The removal of our friends and acquaintance from the regions of mortality, eſpecially of thoſe who were not worn out with age, but cut off in the prime of life, is a loud call to ſerious reflection, and to a due conſideration of our latter end. Every inſtance of this kind ſhould rouſe us from that ſecurity and inſenſibility into which we are apt to ſink. The preſent diſpenſation, in particular, has a voice in it, it ſpeaks to every one of us, in the language of him who is to be our Judge at laſt, "Be ye there-

therefore ready alſo, for in an hour when ye think not the Son of man ſhall come."

When our deceaſed friend languiſhed in the immediate proſpect of her diſſolution, it was her requeſt that the text we have juſt read to you, might be improved at her funeral, for the benefit of thoſe who ſhe thought would be preſent, for whoſe beſt intereſts ſhe had a deep concern. The words had been rendered peculiarly uſeful to her; ſhe adopted them as her own, and found much relief and comfort in thinking of them. Senſible of her wants, ſhe had no other refuge but the mercy of God, through the atoning ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt; to that refuge ſhe fled with great ardour of mind, and in it ſhe was enabled to confide. Let us remember, that the mercy which ſhe ſo earneſtly ſought, and which, we doubt not, ſhe found, we ourſelves abſolutely need, and without an intereſt in it, we ſhall be miſerable for ever. "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my ſoul truſteth in thee; yea, in the ſhadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until theſe calamities be overpaſt."

The following particulars ſeem to demand our attention, in a practical improvement of this por-

tion of the divine word, on the preſent occaſion:—*The earneſt and pathetic cry for mercy;—the mercy itſelf to which the ſinner looks in his diſtreſs;—and the hope and confidence repoſed in it.*

I. The earneſt and pathetic cry for mercy, here preſented before God, cannot fail to ſtrike every attentive mind. "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me." This is a petition ſuitable for every one of us, and highly proper to be adopted by us at all times, when we addreſs the Author of our exiſtence. He is the Father of our Spirits, he is our ſupreme Governor, he will be our Judge at the laſt great day, and to him we are accountable for all the thoughts and diſpoſitions of our hearts, for all the words of our lips, and for every action of our hands. He has given us a law by which we ought to be governed, in all that we think, and ſpeak, and do; with a ſolemn aſſurance, that "he will bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good or evil." This law is ſuch as becomes a Being glorious in holineſs, and who has an infinite abhorrence of all ſin. It is a tranſcript of the purity of his own nature; it is holy, juſt and good. It is comprehended in theſe two branches,

"Thou

"Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind. This is the firſt and great commandment. And the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. On theſe two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Theſe commandments ſurely are not grievous. An exact conformity unto them, as it is in itſelf a reaſonable ſervice, ſo it would have contributed to our own happineſs. But theſe commandments we have broken; theſe laws we have violated in ten thouſand inſtances. And hence that deluge of troubles, of afflictions, of calamities, with which human life is overwhelmed. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble; he is born to trouble, as the ſparks fly upwards." His contracted ſpan of exiſtence here is imbittered by diſtreſs; his days are often ſpent in grief, and his years in ſighing. All this is the fruit of ſin.

Loaded with ſo much guilt, and, in conſequence, oppreſſed with ſo much miſery, we all ſtand in the greateſt need of mercy, and we ought to ſeek it at all times with the moſt earneſt and perſevering ſolicitude. But this, alas! is not the caſe with the generality of mankind. A ſtupid inſenſibility is one of the

ſad

ſad effects of our apoſtaſy from God. We ſeek to alleviate the anxieties of our minds, and to lighten the burden of life almoſt any way, rather than by returning to him that ſmiteth, humbling ourſelves before him, and crying for mercy. The expreſſion indeed is very common in the mouths of unthinking perſons, when any thing ſurpriſes them, 'Lord, have mercy on us!' but this, I fear, is little better than a profanation of the divine name. There are ſome ſeaſons, however, when ſinners are brought with earneſtneſs and importunity to make ſupplication to their Judge, and to cry to him in language ſimilar to that in the text, if not in the very ſame words, "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me." Permit me to mention a few of thoſe ſeaſons.

1. This is the caſe when men are awakened to a juſt ſenſe of their ſins, and of their deſerts, and their danger becauſe of them. While men are wrapt up in ſecurity and ſelf-deceit, while they are bleſſing themſelves in a way that is not good, and concluding that they ſhall have peace, though they walk after vanity, and delight in lies, there are no earneſt ſupplications offered up for divine mercy. Prayer, though a duty of natural religion, and enjoined by the expreſs com-

command of God, is nevertheleſs, either totally neglected, or attended to in a very ſlight, formal and unfeeling manner. But when he, who ſays to the thoughtleſs ſinner, "Awake thou that ſleepeſt, ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light," when he rouſes the conſcience, illuminates the benighted mind, quickens all the drowſy powers of the ſoul, and ſets death, judgment and eternity before the ſinner, it is then that he begins to pray, and to cry for mercy. His paſt offences are brought to his remembrance, they ſtand in dreadful array before him, he reviews them with grief, ſhame, and horror of mind; he beholds the terrors of that law which he has violated in ſo many inſtances, he hears its awful maledictions thundered out againſt him, "Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" he ſees the wrath of God revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men; he knows he is juſtly deſerving of it; there ſeems to be but one ſtep between him and death, that death which is the juſt wages of ſin; every deluſive hope is cut off; every falſe refuge is ſeen to fail; every poſſible way of deliverance is ſhut up, except this one, of which he has but a very

very imperfect knowledge, 'God is merciful; Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners.' Now the man has an errand to the throne of grace; he ſees his guilt, he feels the heavy load, as a burden too heavy for him to bear; he is ſenſible of his danger, he is deeply conſcious of his wants; he knows that divine mercy alone can ſave him, through the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, and it may be ſaid of him as it was of Saul of *Tarſus*, when the divine Redeemer had met him in his way to *Damaſcus*, "Behold, he prayeth." He now aſks, like one who knows the value of what excites his importunity; he aſks for the life of his ſoul, for the pardon of his enormous crimes; or, in other words, he aſks for mercy. Like the publican, he ſmites upon his breaſt, and cries, "God be merciful to me, a ſinner." All he wants is ſummed up in that one requeſt. I will not apologize for the recital of a very plain and ſimple, but pathetic verſe, which now occurs to my remembrance, from an ancient hymn, entitled, The lamentation of a ſinner. In its energy it bears ſome reſemblance to the words of our text, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me."

'Mercy, good Lord, mercy I aſk,
This is the total ſum;
For mercy, Lord, is all my ſuit,
O let thy mercy come.'

The queſtion now is, Whether you, who compoſe this audience, are acquainted with the ſtate of mind I have been deſcribing? You all ſtand in need of mercy, but do you ſeek it, as a malefactor, under ſentence of condemnation, ſeeks a pardon from his prince? Do not ſuffer yourſelves to be deluded, by deferring the moſt neceſſary and important of all concerns to a late hour. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." The day of ſalvation is the preſent day, the accepted time is *now;* for you know not what ſhall be on the morrow. The way in which the God of mercy brings ſinners unto himſelf, is by pouring upon them the Spirit of grace and of ſupplication. "They ſhall come with weeping, and with ſupplication will I lead them." When the prodigal came to himſelf, he aroſe and went to his father; the father ſaw him a great way off, had compaſſion on him, ran and fell upon his neck, and kiſſed him.

2. It is a ſpecial ſeaſon of making application to divine mercy, when we are in circumſtances of great danger and difficulty. Such was the caſe of the Pſalmiſt, when he poured forth the ardent petitions contained in this pſalm. He gives theſe pious effuſions of his

heart, the title of *Al-taſchith*, *Deſtroy* (me) *not*; let not thoſe who riſe up againſt me, work my deſtruction. He was in the moſt imminent danger, and owed his preſervation entirely to the interpoſition of divine mercy, in anſwer to his prayer. He, with his few adherents, had taken refuge in the cave of *Engedi*, which, as modern travellers, who have ſeen it, tell us, is near the ſummit of a high mountain. It is large, deep, and obſcure. *Saul*, with three thouſand men, came to the very place; *Saul* entered the cave, and was within the reach of *David*. There was no retreat, no human probability of eſcape. *Saul* and his men had the rage and cruelty of hungry lions, hunting for prey. Hence the poor fugitive ſays, v. 4. "My ſoul is among lions; I lie even among them that are ſet on fire." In ſuch a caſe, what could he do? He cried to the God of mercy, for protection, and ſaid, "My ſoul truſteth in thee, yea, in the ſhadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until theſe calamities be overpaſt." He was not diſappointed, but found the mercy he ſought. For they who make God their refuge ſhall never be confounded.

When *Jacob*, with his feeble family, had to meet his enraged brother *Eſau*, who came againſt

againſt him with a band of four hundred men, what did he do? He was greatly afraid; but he ſought relief in retired devotion, from the drawing on of the ſhadows of the evening, until the break of day. He wreſtled with the angel of the everlaſting covenant, ſaying, "I will not let thee go unleſs thou bleſs me." As a prince he had power with God, and prevailed. *Eſau* was diſarmed of all his furious paſſions, and when he met his brother *Jacob*, every degree of reſentment was forgotten; inſtead of violence, the tendereſt affection was diſcovered on the part of *Eſau*, who fell upon his brother's neck, and kiſſed him, as the tendereſt mother would embrace a darling ſon, after a long abſence.

Theſe and many other inſtances are recorded for our admonition, that we may learn to make divine mercy our refuge in every hour of danger and diſtreſs. The God of infinite mercy has encouraged, invited and commanded us, to pray always, and not to faint; and to pray without ceaſing; but eſpecially, to come boldly to his throne of grace, in the ſeaſon of perplexity and danger. "Call upon me in the time of thy trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me." When the ſuffering Saviour was in an agony, he prayed the more earneſtly.

3. Another ſeaſon of ſpecial application to divine mercy is, when we are aſſaulted by violent temptations. Whatever infidelity may ſuggeſt to the contrary, thoſe who allow the inſpiration of the Bible muſt be perſuaded, that there is a formidable conſpiracy of wicked ſpirits, who diſcover a blaſphemous contempt of God, and are continually endeavouring to defeat the purpoſes of his government. Why ſhould we call in queſtion the exiſtence and the agency of apoſtate ſpirits? We are every where ſurrounded with men who reſemble them, in malignity of diſpoſition, and in oppoſition to all that is good and holy. No account can be delivered in plainer terms, none more repeatedly aſſerted and confirmed, than that which the ſacred writers give us of the fallen angels. Univerſal experience verifies what the ſacred volume affirms on this ſubject.

Thoſe who are reſcued from under the dominion of Satan are yet liable to his attacks; for the tyrant will not quietly reſign his prey.—"The devil, your adverſary, goeth about as a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour." We are required to be prepared for the combat, by "putting on the whole armour of God, that we may ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil."

Our

Our bleſſed Redeemer, who was tempted in all points like as we are, and who came to bruiſe the old ſerpent's head, and to deſtroy his works, informs us, that when his diſciples were induced to forſake him, it was through the influence of Satan, who "deſired to have them, that he might ſift them as wheat." There are ſeaſons when this dreadful adverſary ſeems to be let looſe upon us, and by a kind of violent importunity, would hurry us on to ſpeak or do thoſe things which our ſouls abhor. Such blaſphemous thoughts diſtract our minds as make us a terror to ourſelves. We are tempted to call in queſtion the truth of that revelation which is the ground of all our hope, and the very exiſtence of that God whom we love and adore. The enemy comes in upon us like a flood. All is ſtorm and tempeſt within; we walk in darkneſs, and have no light, no ray of heavenly conſolation to chear our deſponding minds. The beſt method we can take for deliverance is that which is exemplified in the text, offering up our earneſt and repeated cries before the divine throne for mercy, with humble hope of ſucceſs; "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my ſoul truſteth in thee; yea, in the ſhadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,

until

until theſe calamities be overpaſt." By all prayer and ſupplication, accompanied with the ſhield of faith, we ſhall be enabled "to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one," and "to reſiſt the devil, that he may flee from us." Thus when the apoſtle *Paul* was afflicted by what he emphatically calls "a thorn in the fleſh, the meſſenger of Satan," or the meſſenger Satan, * "to buffet him, he beſought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him." Nor did he ſeek in vain, for the Lord ſaid unto him, "My grace is ſufficient for thee; my ſtrength is made perfect through weakneſs."

4. If at any time we have been unhappily enſnared by ſin, and have been guilty of backſliding from God, it is highly neceſſary that we ſhould take with us words, and return unto him, ſaying, "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, reſtore my ſoul, heal my backſlidings, and love me freely." Relapſes into ſin are awfully dangerous to the welfare of our ſouls, and the credit of the good cauſe for which we profeſs ourſelves advocates. By the indulgence of ſin, conſcience is wounded, the Holy Spirit is grieved, his gracious influences are ſuſpended, we are left in darkneſs, diſquietude, and

* Αγγελος Σαταν. 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9.

and deſpondency; God is diſhonoured, and ſometimes occaſion is given to his enemies to blaſpheme. Our iniquities ſeparate between us and our God, and cauſe him to hide his face from us. Speedy repentance is above all things neceſſary, leſt our hearts be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy firſt works." The calls of our compaſſionate Father, in ſuch a caſe, ſhould move and melt our our hearts. He looks upon us with a pitying eye, when iniquities prevail againſt us, and ſays, "Turn, O backſliding children, for I am married unto you; return, and I will heal your backſlidings." With weeping and ſupplication, with ſhame and confuſion of face, we ſhould approach again and again to him, from whom we have revolted, and ſay, with the Pſalmiſt, after his dreadful fall, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindneſs; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my tranſgreſſions." Offering unto him the ſacrifices of a broken heart, and a contrite ſpirit, we ſhould cry, "Caſt me not away from thy preſence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right ſpirit within me.

Make

Make me to hear joy and gladneſs, that the bones which thou haſt broken may rejoice. Reſtore unto me the joys of thy ſalvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit." Thus *Peter*, when, through the power of temptation, he had denied his Maſter, went out, and wept bitterly.

5. I only mention one caſe more of ſpecial pleading for mercy, and that is, when we are ſeized by ſickneſs, and threatened with the ſtroke of mortality. It is one of the moſt common, and, I fear there is juſt reaſon to add, one of the moſt fatal deluſions into which ſinners are drawn, through the inſtigation of Satan, and the deceits of their own hearts, to put off all thoughts of ſeeking mercy, at the hand of God, to a dying hour. Dare not to form a purpoſe ſo full of abſurdity, and of wickedneſs. It would be juſt as if you ſhould ſay, 'I am determined to ſerve ſin and Satan as long as it is poſſible, depending on the mercy of God to ſave me, when I can ſerve them no longer. I will act the part of a rebel againſt God as long as I am able, and I expect he will take me to his boſom, and make me happy in his favour for ever, when I can do no more to diſhonour him.' A purpoſe more iniquitous, more diabolical

lical than this, cannot be formed in the mind of man. A deſign more dangerous with reſpect to yourſelves cannot be thought of. It is hazarding all that relates to your eternal well-being, on the greateſt uncertainty that can be imagined. Forbid it, O God, that any man ſhould leave this place, with ſuch a purpoſe in his heart, as to put off all thoughts of ſeeking mercy at thy hands, to the laſt moments of his life!

But if we take refuge in the mercy of God, in time of health and vigour, we ſhall ſtill be under peculiar neceſſity of doing ſo, when we are attacked by a mortal diſorder, and have death and eternity in full view. This was the caſe with the deceaſed. Her prayers for mercy began to be offered up long before her laſt ſickneſs; but her laſt ſickneſs added fervour to her cries. She then ſaw it was time to be deeply in earneſt about the life of her ſoul. She ſorely lamented that degree of lukewarmneſs and indifference which had attended her in former years. She mourned that ſhe had been kept back from attendance to the ſpecial ordinances of the goſpel, by that timidity which aroſe from a ſenſe of her own unworthineſs. Let this be

conſidered as an admonition to others, to delay no longer on the ſame account.

"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me," is a ſuitable prayer for a dying man. Death, in the gentleſt form, is uſually preceded by violent ſymptoms. Mortal ſwoonings, feveriſh heats, paroxyſms of pain, and tortures inſupportable, are often the harbingers of the diſſolution of our frame.

We are then going to leave all that is dear to us in this world; poſſeſſions to which perhaps we have been too eagerly attached; friends whom we have loved as our own ſouls; a wife, or a huſband, to whom we have been united by the cloſeſt ties, confirmed and ſtrengthened by many years of tender endearment; children, who are parts of ourſelves, the objects of conſtant ſolicitude and parental love; we are going to leave them, helpleſs, expoſed, and unguarded, in a world full of ſnares and dangers; the parting hour is come, how ſhall it be endured! "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me," in this ſeaſon of trial.—The family is called together to attend to the counſels, the charges, and the laſt adieu of the dying perſon. Their ſighs and tears pierce his heart through and through, adding double weight

weight to the load under which languiſhing nature cannot long ſubſiſt. What a ſcene is this!

But generally ſpeaking, it is not parting with what is dear to us on earth, which renders this ſeaſon moſt formidable. It is the idea of the account that muſt be given to God, the Judge of all. We are going to ſtand before his bar. Our final ſtate will be fixed unalterably.—Eternity is before us. For ſome moments perhaps the review of our paſt miſcarriages may fill us with horror. The enemy of ſouls may aſſault us with unuſual fury; it is his laſt effort. The diſcoveries of pardoning mercy are never ſo needful as now, and perhaps were never ſought with ſo much fervour. On divine mercy, manifeſted through the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world, all our hope muſt reſt, "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life." Of merit we have nothing to plead. The holieſt man, the moſt advanced chriſtian is conſcious that he has been an unprofitable ſervant. The publican's prayer is ſtill moſt ſuitable for him, "God be merciful to me a ſinner." The ſting of death is ſin. That ſting is taken away by the Redeemer's croſs, and by that only, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through

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our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." When the dying chriſtian has a full view, by faith, of the all-conquering Redeemer, ſo that he can ſay, as in the latter part of our text, "My ſoul truſteth in thee," the conflict is over, the victory is gained, the immortal prize is in view, and the ſong of *Simeon* is adopted, "Lord, now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace; for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation."

II. We proceed to *conſider the mercy itſelf, to which the ſinner looks in his diſtreſs.*

The mercy of God is his readineſs to relieve the miſerable. This is one of the glorious attributes of the divine nature, the exerciſe of which is under the direction of his infinite wiſdom, and ſovereign good-pleaſure. He is merciful "according to his loving-kindneſs;" and "rich in mercy for the great love wherewith he loved us." His mercy is his love, as it is manifeſted to thoſe who are in miſery.

God is merciful in the daily diſpenſations of his providence, towards the ſinful race of men. "The Lord is good to all; his tender mercies are over all his works." His mercy feeds us with food convenient for us; his mercy clothes us; his mercy upholds, protects, and defends

us

us continually, by night and by day, at home and abroad, amidſt the many dangers with which we are ſurrounded. He is kind even to the unthankful and the evil; cauſing the ſun to ſhine and the rain to fall on the juſt and the unjuſt. The common mercies of his providence ſhould be ſought by prayer; and for the beſtowment of them, our praiſes are conſtantly due.

Yet of theſe mercies a man may largely partake, and ſtill remain the enemy of God, the ſlave of ſin, the captive of Satan, and in the broad way which leadeth to deſtruction. The goodneſs of God leadeth him not to repentance, but, after his hardneſs and impenitent heart, he treaſureth up to himſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. We ſee that "the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power; their ſeed is eſtabliſhed in their ſight; their houſes are ſafe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them; they are not plagued like other men, nor chaſtened like other men; they proſper in the earth, and increaſe in riches." Mercies without number are perpetually poured down upon them. Yet "they ſet their mouth againſt the heavens, and their tongue walketh

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through the earth. They ſay unto God, Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways; what is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him? and what profit ſhall we have if we pray to him?" At the very time that they are loaded with mercies, they grow more and more rooted in their enmity to that God who beſtows them, lifting up their hands in rebellion againſt him. This is awfully ſet forth by our divine Teacher, in the parable of the rich man, who abounded with all the good things of this life, yet lived without God in the world, died in his ſins, and was doomed to deſerved deſtruction. He was clothed in purple and fine linen; he fared ſumptuouſly every day; but he at length died, was buried, and, though he had ſlumbered life away in ſtupid inſenſibility, he lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torments, and cried, but cried in vain, for a drop of water to cool his tongue.

But though the common mercies of Providence are all that many ſeek, and having theſe, they aſk no more; yet the mercy requeſted in our text, relates not only to the body, but to the ſoul; not only to time, but to eternity; not only to this world, but to that which is to come.—"Be merciful to me, for my SOUL truſteth in thee."

thee." I pray God, that all who hear me this day, may ſeek, with the greateſt ſolicitude and importunity, that mercy which delivers from eternal deſtruction, which pardons ſin, and ſaves, effectually ſaves both ſoul and body, with an everlaſting ſalvation! —— Concerning the mercy of God, I would beg leave to ſay, that,

1. It is never manifeſted to any but in perfect conſiſtency with truth, juſtice and holineſs. Far be it from us, ſimple, ſhort-ſighted creatures, to preſcribe limits to an INFINITE BEING; yet it is no limitation of the Almighty, to ſuppoſe him incapable of acting otherwiſe than in perfect conſiſtency with himſelf. It is no infringement on his abſolute ſovereignty to ſay, that he cannot but order whatever relates to the government of his creatures, for the honour of his juſtice, his truth, and his holineſs, as well as of his goodneſs and his mercy. The ſacred writers do not ſcruple to affirm, in the plaineſt and ſtrongeſt manner, that "God cannot lie;" that "he cannot deny himſelf." He hath ſolemnly declared, that "deſtruction ſhall be to the workers of iniquity," that "the wages of ſin is death," and that "the ſoul that ſinneth ſhall die." His truth and his juſtice ſtand engaged to execute the threatening. The eternal law

law of rectitude and purity cannot be made void, the ſupreme authority of God, his infinite holineſs, and his inviolable faithfulneſs, cannot be ſet aſide, diſhonoured, or trampled upon, under any conſideration whatever. "The Lord God is merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs and truth; keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin;" yet, to prevent any wrong conceptions of the Moſt High, and to guard againſt all abuſe of the proclamation he has made, we are aſſured, that "he will by no means clear the guilty;" that is, he will not do it without ſuch ſatisfaction as will repair the diſhonour done by the ſinner to his name, and to his law.

Hence the wonderful expedient of an interpoſing Surety, Mediator, or Saviour, which the precious goſpel every where unfolds. "God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life." Rather than his truth ſhould be violated, or his juſtice diſhonoured, he was pleaſed to deliver up his beloved Son to all the ignominy of the croſs. "JESUS was ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities; the chaſ-

chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed." We are far from aſſerting, that this wonderful expedient was neceſſary to incline or diſpoſe the Author of our being to have mercy on his miſerable offending creatures. God is love; he delighteth in mercy. The kindneſs and compaſſion of his infinite mind were more than ſufficient to ſave ſinners, without the death of his Son, had it been conſiſtent with his truth and righteouſneſs ſo to do. But as his receiving them to favour, without ſome public and demonſtrative expreſſion of his diſpleaſure againſt their ſin, would have been diſhonourable to his holineſs, and to the rights of his moral government, it was his good pleaſure to ſhew mercy in a way of righteouſneſs, by delivering up his only-begotten Son, to become a ſacrifice for ſin, that by him, "grace might reign through righteouſneſs, unto eternal life." When a righteous Judge has a criminal before him, who has violated the laws of his country, having been guilty of various acts of rebellion and treaſon, whatever good-will the judge may bear to the offender, he cannot admit the thought of paſſing by ſuch enormous crimes, without ſome public teſtimony againſt them. Mercy muſt not be

manifeſted at the expence of law and equity, leſt the rights of government ſhould be trampled upon, as of no conſequence, and tranſgreſſors, under the preſumption of having nothing to fear, ſhould be hardened in their crimes.

Can any man ſuppoſe, that the infinitely wiſe and holy God ſhould have enacted a law ſo rigorous as to require a repeal? that he had iſſued threatenings which he found it neceſſary to retract? or that he had formed a ſyſtem of government, from which he afterwards ſaw it needful to depart? Surely not. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, juſt and right is he." The goſpel ſyſtem is for ever endeared to our hearts, becauſe it diſplays the divine character in the moſt glorious manner, and gives due honour both to the awful and the amiable perfections of him who is to be the object of our ſupreme affection. Let us have grace that we may ſerve him with reverence and godly fear, for our God, abſolutely conſidered, without an interpoſing Mediator, is, to ſinners, a conſuming fire. But, through the atoning ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt, mercy is built up, and triumphs for ever, in perfect conſiſtency with truth and holineſs. God

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declares his righteouſneſs even in the remiſſion of ſins, and ſhews himſelf juſt, while he is the juſtifier of the ſinner who believeth in Jeſus. In the croſs of Immanuel, mercy and truth meet together, righteouſneſs and peace embrace each other. The mercy therefore to which we fly in all our miſeries, is emphatically called, "The mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt," and "the love of God which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord." It were eaſy to ſhew, that every inſtance of ſaving mercy flows to us through this medium alone. As there is no name under heaven given among men whereby we muſt be ſaved, but the name of Jeſus, ſo there is no other way in which we can hope to find mercy. The divine Redeemer has ſaid, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

2. This mercy ſtands oppoſed to all merit in the creature. No man obtains it becauſe he is more deſerving of it than another. Merited mercy is a contradiction in terms. The phariſee thought himſelf entitled to the divine favour, becauſe he was better than other men; he was no extortioner, he was not unjuſt, he was not an adulterer, nor in any reſpect like the publican, whom he ſaw at a diſtance. Yet this

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man went down to his houſe not juſtified, but under the ſentence of condemnation. The publican, ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes to heaven, but looking downward with dejection, and having a deep ſenſe of his own vileneſs, he ſmote upon his breaſt, as if he would take revenge upon his own depraved heart, the fountain whence all the impure ſtreams of ſin had iſſued through life; he cried out, with that fervour and earneſtneſs which pierced the clouds, "God be merciful to me a ſinner," 'a guilty, miſerable, hell-deſerving wretch, who have no merit to plead, no one good qualification to recommend me to thy notice; yet, be propitious to me, * through the atoning ſacrifices offered up in this holy place.'—He obtained the mercy he ſought; for he went down to his houſe juſtified.

If acceptance with God be of works; if it be on account of our obedience, it is no more of grace. Works and grace, in this great concern, are irreconcilable oppoſites. They mutually vacate each other. For "to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt. So then, it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy." Hence,

3.

* ιλασθητι μοι. Luke xviii. 10--13.

3. This mercy is free to all who aſk and ſeek it. To the Gentile and the Jew, to the rich and the poor, to the young and the old, to the male and the female, it is abſolutely free. It is the glory of divine mercy, that it is denied to none, be their differing circumſtances what they may, who fly to it as their refuge. Whatever be their guilt, whatever their unworthineſs, whatever their vileneſs, mercy opens her compaſſionate arms to embrace them. This is fully and clearly ſet forth in the ſacred ſcriptures, not to embolden any to continue in ſin becauſe grace abounds, but to encourage the miſerable, the deſponding, the ſelf-condemned, who are conſcious of their deſerts. The free proclamations of mercy are almoſt without number. The Old Teſtament and the New are enriched with them; yea, the ſacred volume is cloſed in this delightful manner, "The Spirit and the bride ſay, Come. And let him that heareth ſay, Come. And let him that is athirſt, come: and whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely." He who thus ſpeaks, is the Author of eternal ſalvation, through whom the unbounded mercy of God is ſo richly diſplayed, and ſo plentifully diſpenſed to ſinners. He gives a hearty welcome to every comer, declaring

ing that whoſoever will may partake of his ſaving mercy, as freely as he makes uſe of the moſt common refreſhments; as freely as he drinks of the running ſtream. It is that ſame Jeſus who, in the language of prophecy, ſaid, "Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none elſe; beſides me there is no Saviour." If divine mercy were a ſpring ſhut up, or a fountain ſealed, if *any* were forbidden to approach, or denied admittance to it, we might well ſink into deſpondency. Were none made welcome but perſons poſſeſſed of amiable diſpoſitions and recommending qualifications, multitudes might ſit down and ſay, 'There is no hope for me.' But the divine proclamation is made to the unworthieſt of all. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return unto the Lord, and he will HAVE MERCY upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Can you aſcertain the dimenſions of the heavens with a line, or meaſure their ſtupendous arches

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with a compaſs? Sooner may you do either, than comprehend the greatneſs, or ſet limits to the freedom of that mercy "which is above the heavens." O that all who hear me this day, may be enabled to attend to this one property of divine mercy, and to "mix faith" with what they hear! Multitudes are held faſt in the chains of ſin, ſhut up in darkneſs, and ſhivering on the brink of deſpair, for want of knowing and believing, that divine mercy is abſolutely free to every one that aſks and ſeeks it, without exception. The Redeemer of men has ſaid, "Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you." And, as if all this were not enough to encourage us, he has graciouſly added, "For EVERY ONE that aſketh receiveth: and he that ſeeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it ſhall be opened." Animated by theſe liberal proclamations, and encouraged by theſe precious promiſes, let us aſk without delay, that we may receive; let us ſeek with importunity, that we may find; let us loudly knock at the door of mercy, that it may be opened to us. Let us not hearken to the ſuggeſtions of unbelief, reſpecting our own guilt or unworthineſs; for, to cut off all objections, which may riſe in our minds

minds againſt ourſelves, on any account whatſoever, Jeſus has ſaid, "Him that cometh to me, I will IN NO WISE caſt out."

4. This mercy is abundantly anſwerable to every neceſſity that can attend us. "My God," ſays the apoſtle, "ſhall ſupply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Chriſt Jeſus." Whatever be your wants, divine mercy will amply ſupply them. Are you in danger of everlaſting deſtruction? Jeſus delivers you from the wrath to come. Through him, divine mercy ſays, "Deliver them from going down to the pit, I have found a ranſom." Are you chargeable with many offences? Are your ſins gone over your heads, as a heavy burden, too heavy for you to bear? Are you crying, like the Pſalmiſt, "O Lord, I beſeech thee, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great?" The God of all grace ſays, "I will be merciful to their unrighteouſneſſes, their ſins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Divine mercy blots out millions and millions of rebellious actions, blots them out freely, and for ever. It buries them all as that which is buried in the depth of the ſea, to be found no more. Are you polluted and unclean? Divine mercy has opened a fountain for ſin, and for uncleanneſs; waſhed in this, you will

will, in the iſſue, be "whiter than ſnow, without ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing." Are you condemned by that holy law which you have violated? Divine mercy juſtifies you from all things; you are juſtified freely by the Father's grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt. You are ſet clear from every charge, as if you had never tranſgreſſed; for there is no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus, and who, as a proof their being ſo, walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit. Are you in bondage? Divine mercy proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the priſon to them that are bound. Are you diſeaſed? It cures every diſtemper which ſin has introduced; it heals all your diſeaſes. Are you impoveriſhed? Do you ſee yourſelves deſtitute of all things, and, like the *Laodiceans*, wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked? Divine mercy enriches you, with the unſearchable riches of Chriſt; makes you rich towards God, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. It raiſes you from the duſt, it lifts you from the dung-hill, to ſet you with princes, and to make you inherit thrones of glory. Are you weak? Divine mercy will be your ſtrength, working in you to will and to do of God's good pleaſure.

The Fountain of eternal mercy ſays, "My grace is ſufficient for thee, my ſtrength is made perfect through weakneſs; fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not diſmayed, for I am thy God; I will ſtrengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteouſneſs."

5. This mercy is, therefore, in every reſpect, wonderful and ſurpriſing. It excites aſtoniſhment in him who partakes of its bleſſings. He often ſays within himſelf, 'Why do apoſtate men obtain mercy, and not the fallen angels? For them no Saviour is provided, no ſacrifice is offered up. They have provoked the high and holy God; ſo have we. They are juſtly condemned; ſo were we. They are full of enmity againſt the Sovereign of the univerſe, and deſire no reconciliation with him; this alſo has been our caſe. What natural right have we to mercy more than they?

'If I look among my fellow-tranſgreſſors, I have ſtill greater reaſon to wonder at that diſtinguiſhing mercy which has been ſhewn to me. Were not my provocations as great as thoſe of others, who are yet in a ſtate of impenitence? Was not my heart as deſperately wicked as theirs? Was I more pliable, more eaſy to be re-

reclaimed than they? No, no; I was obſtinate, my neck was as an iron ſinew, and my brow as braſs. It was ſaving mercy alone that opened my benighted eyes, dethroned the enmity of my heart, and brought me to ſeek and cry for the pardon of thoſe crimes which loudly called for divine vengeance to be poured on my guilty head. "So then hath HE mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compaſſion on whom he will have compaſſion." The conſideration of this, as it fills me with aſtoniſhment, and ſinks me in the very duſt of humiliation and ſelf-abaſement, ſo it excites me to pray, and encourages me to hope, that others, even the vileſt and moſt miſerable of mankind, may yet obtain mercy.

'At the greatneſs of divine mercy, as triumphing over all the unworthineſs, all the guilt, and all the perverſeneſs of men, I can never ceaſe to wonder. Our God is RICH in mercy; his mercy is above the heavens. But the way in which his mercy is diſplayed, and in which it ſo glorioufly reigns, is moſt aſtoniſhing of all. The only-begotten Son of God, the Delight of the Father, the Darling of heaven, the Lord of glory, muſt ſtoop to the loweſt degree of humiliation and abaſement, muſt bear

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the load of human guilt, be expoſed to contempt, to ſcorn and ſpitting, muſt be made a curſe, be ſtricken and ſmitten of God and afflicted, be nailed to the croſs, and expire in agonies unknown, that we might have healing by his ſtripes, redemption through his blood, and life by his death. Of all wonders, of all myſteries, this is the greateſt. Celeſtial intelligences find their exalted powers too feeble to comprehend the theme. The angels of God ſtoop down, with all the ardour of inquiry, and all the fervour of love and adoration, deſiring "to look into it." It will furniſh matter for everlaſting aſtoniſhment, joy and praiſe to all the inhabitants of heaven. We are informed what will be the ſentiments, and what the ſongs, of all the redeemed; "Unto him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts to God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Bleſſing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

Finally, This mercy will be everlaſtingly with thoſe who ſeek it, and who confide in it. "I truſt," ſays the Pſalmiſt, "in the mercy of God for ever and ever." It never fails to abide

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with thoſe who are enabled ſo to do, till it has prepared them for the kingdom of glory, and brought them thither. It is indeed diſplayed in a variety of forms. Sometimes it chaſtens, ſometimes it comforts; ſometimes it caſts us down, and ſometimes lifts us up. Now it abaſes our pride, and then raiſes us again from the abyſs of grief and ſorrow. It ſometimes puts on a frown, that, for wiſe and holy ends, we may be in heavineſs; at other times, it puts off our ſackcloth, and girds us with gladneſs; it brings us up from the horrible pit, out of the miry clay; it ſets our feet upon a rock, eſtabliſhes our goings, and puts a new ſong into our mouth, even praiſe unto our God.

We often miſtake the deſigns and the operations of mercy. When we are bereaved of our deareſt earthly comforts; when the deſire of our eyes is taken from us with a ſtroke, and that, perhaps, at a time when we moſt need ſupport and aſſiſtance; when we are broken with breach upon breach, we are ready to ſay, in our haſte, 'All theſe things are againſt me! Woe is me, I am undone; I am ruined, I am ruined.' But this is our infirmity. The mercy of God is not clean gone for ever; his promiſe doth not fail for evermore. He hath not forgotten to be gra-

gracious, neither hath he in anger ſhut up his tender mercies. Hear the voice of his mouth, O thou that art afflicted, toſſed with tempeſts, and not comforted; "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlaſting kindneſs will I have mercy on thee, ſaith the Lord thy Redeemer. For the mountains ſhall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, neither ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed, ſaith the LORD that hath mercy on thee." "All things," even the ſevereſt trials, the heavieſt loſſes, and the ſtrokes which ſeparate between us and the deareſt objects of our affections, "work together for good." Theſe afflictions are the very fruits of that mercy which is uniformly directed to the promoting of our beſt intereſts. "For whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every Son whom he receiveth." In the counſels of infinite mercy concerning you, my dear and honoured Brother, the preſent affecting diſpenſation was a part of the plan. This is a ſoothing thought. I hope you will be enabled to bow your head in ſubmiſſion to him who performeth the thing which was appointed for you, and to ſay, "The Lord gave,

gave, and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord."

Divine mercy attends us through all the varying ſcenes of this tranſitory world; and as we ſhall need it, and muſt ſeek it, when we come to walk through the valley of the ſhadow of death, we may reſt aſſured, that it will be preſent with us there. The continuance of it is as ſure as the promiſe and the oath of God can make it; that by theſe two immutable things in which it is impoſſible for God to lie, we might have ſtrong conſolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope ſet before us. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlaſting to everlaſting upon them that fear him." From everlaſting in its counſels, to everlaſting in its continuance and conſequences. In the hundred and thirty-ſixth pſalm, the perpetuity of divine mercy is celebrated with tranſports of delight, ſuited to the nature of ſo intereſting a theme. The church dwells upon it as if it were all her boaſt, and as if ſhe could never ſay enough about it. Twenty-ſix times the charming chorus is repeated, "HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER." This brings us,

III.

III. *Juſt briefly to touch upon the hope and confidence repoſed in divine mercy, by thoſe who fly to it.*

"For my ſoul truſteth in thee; yea, in the ſhadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until theſe calamities be overpaſt." Penitence, prayer and hope are all united in the experience of the returning ſinner, and they are all expreſſed in the words under conſideration. The truſt here mentioned is the effect of divine illumination, and of a belief of the truth, reſpecting the way in which the God of mercy ſaves ſinners, through the death of his beloved Son. "They that know thy name will put their truſt in thee." Agreeable to this are the words of the apoſtle *Paul*, "I know whom I have believed, and I am perſuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him againſt that day." By a ſettled truſt in the almighty Redeemer, and his atoning ſacrifice, the agitated boſom is compoſed, the heart is tranquillized, and the conſcience filled with the peace of God.* "Thou

* Thus it was with the deceaſed. The mercy of God, through the bleſſed Redeemer, was her only refuge; and though ſhe did not ſpeak of any extraordinary raptures of mind, ſhe *here* found reſt to her ſoul. As ſhe drew nearer to her end, a humble, ſpiritual, heavenly frame of heart was more

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

more and more apparent. She often repeated the following lines from a hymn, composed, I believe, by Mr. *Toplady*:

'Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.'

At one time, when she appeared to be in an agony of pain, to the surprise of all about her, she suddenly broke out in singing, with great energy and sweetness, the 5th verse of the 126th Psalm, by Dr. Watts;

'Let those that sow in sadness wait
Till the fair harvest come;
They shall confess their sheaves are great,
And shout the blessings home.'

When asked why she sung under such great agony, her reply was, 'I would sing, because it felt so sweet to me.'

The all-gracious Redeemer was the object of her ardent affection. It pleased God to render a book, lately published, on *the Preciousness of Christ to those that believe*, of peculiar use to her, in her affliction. She wished to have certain parts of it read to her again and again. For several months during her pregnancy of her *fourteenth* child, she was so much afflicted, that she fully believed her end to be approaching. After the delivery, she languished several weeks, looking for the blessed hope; but, nature being quite exhausted, she at length suddenly breathed out her soul into the bosom of her Saviour, May 24, 1799, aged 41, leaving her dear husband, with whom she had lived in great harmony about twenty-one years, in very disconsolate circumstances. Her maiden name was *Anna Thornton*. She was the daughter of Mr. *Thomas Thornton*, of *Bradford*.

With this truſt is connected a reſolution to continue waiting upon God, in quiet ſubmiſſion and humble dependance, till the ſtorm of life be over. "In the ſhadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until theſe calamities be overpaſt." Calamities now attend us.—"This is the time of Jacob's trouble." Various are the troubles to which human life is ſubject; but they will not laſt for ever. "The things concerning me," ſaid the ſuffering Saviour, "have an end." While calamities continue, the children of God have ſure protection at hand. The figure in the text is familiar, but highly proper and pleaſing. The hen protects her brood under her wings, and expoſes herſelf, rather than they ſhould be in danger, covering them with her feathers till the ſtorm be over, or till the bird of prey be gone; ſo, the Lord defends his helpleſs children, who make the ſhadow of his wings their refuge, till theſe calamities be overpaſt. By and by the days of mourning ſhall be ended; all tears ſhall be wiped away; and ſurely we may "reckon," with the apoſtle *Paul*, "that the ſufferings of the preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us."

Divine

Divine mercy was the refuge of the deceaſed while her troubles laſted, let it be ours. The beſt improvement we can make of the preſent affecting diſpenſation is, by penitence, prayer and hope, to betake ourſelves to the ſame refuge, without one moment's delay. God grant that this may be the caſe with us all!—Having protracted this diſcourſe to too great a length, inſtead of a more particular application of the ſubject, after thanking you for your ſerious attention, I muſt conclude, by obſerving, that the deceaſed has ſeen an end of the calamities of life, and, we truſt, is gone to the regions of peace and felicity. The labours, the anxieties, and the ſolicitudes attendant on that important ſtation in which Providence had placed her, and which ſhe has been enabled to fill up with reputation and advantage, can be fully known to none but to thoſe who are fixed in a ſimilar ſituation.

It was her deſire, that, on this occaſion, her dear children might have a word of exhortation addreſſed to them. 'Tell them,' ſaid ſhe, 'of the great importance of early piety, and that my dying and moſt affectionate requeſt is, that my own children, together with thoſe over whom I have endeavoured to exerciſe a motherly care, may

may remember now their Creator in the days of their youth.' Let this requeſt, ſo ſolemnly urged, ſink deep into all your hearts, and never be forgotten. But I can no more—my feelings are too deeply intereſted. The God of infinite mercy ſeal inſtruction to your minds. May he be your Protector amidſt all the ſnares and dangers of this tranſitory world, and your everlaſting Portion beyond the grave!

ADDRESS at the INTERMENT.

WE are here aſſembled to bid a ſolemn adieu to the remains of an affectionate wife, a tender parent, and a valuable member of ſociety. By her aſſiduity and care, in diſcharging the duties of her ſtation, ſhe acquired the eſteem of a numerous and reſpectable circle of friends. But the ſcene of her activity is now cloſed.—She no longer takes a part in any thing that is done under the ſun. The functions of life have all ceaſed, and the endearing ties, by which ſhe ſtood connected with ſociety, are cut aſunder, in the midſt of her days. At the age of forty-

one,

one, ſhe has taken a final leave of all terreſtrial objects. How ſhort and uncertain is the period allotted to man upon earth! He appears for a moment on the ſtage of exiſtence, caſts his eyes around him, attracts the attention of mortals for a little ſeaſon, then ſinks into the grave, and becomes a prey to crawling worms. The grave is the houſe appointed for all living; we muſt needs die. Even princes die like ourſelves; they fall in the common ruin. There is no diſcharge in this war. Common obſervation, and the Book of God, unite in atteſting this fact. Your fathers where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? What is the world? A ſpacious burying-field unwalled. The turf, on which we tread, once lived. O Death, how wide thy dominion! how extenſive thy conqueſts! Thy conduct is cruel, and thy power invincible—With thee wiſdom is as folly, and riches are as rags—Thou art the bane of life—Thou ſmileſt at tears—Thy ear is deaf, and thy callous heart unmoved, by the moſt ardent cries and earneſt petitions; elſe our dear Siſter had not died.

But why all this waſte of life? Whence is it that we ſee our moſt endearing connections broken, and our beloved friends become pale and

and motionleſs? Is it merely that we may drop a tear over their graves, that we may feel how much we loved them, and teſtify that they ſtill live in our affectionate remembrance? No. It is to manifeſt the diſpleaſure of God againſt ſin, and to prove, beyond a doubt, that all the human race is involved in guilt. There is not one exempt; all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God. Hence the univerſal dominion of death. Sin brought death into the world, and all our woe; it gives to death his ſting, and to the grave her victory. The period of our diſſolution, though unknown to us, is certainly fixed in the counſels and purpoſes of Heaven. It is appointed unto man once to die. Death ſtops the career of life, and breaks off all our purpoſes at once. In that very day the thoughts of a man's heart periſh. Death, however, were it all a man had to fear, might be ſuſtained with fortitude; but after death cometh the judgment. The throne will be ſet, the books opened, and all mankind will be judged by the things that are written therein. Ah, thoughtleſs ſinners, how will you anſwer in this great day of accounts! How will you reply to the righteous charges of an awful and incenſed Judge! As the king of terrors leaves you, ſo will that day

of

of terrors find you. Your ſtate demands all poſſible commiſeration. Perſevering in your ſins, your ruin is inevitable. May theſe awful ſolemnities have a due effect upon you, and induce you ſeriouſly to think of your latter end. The Goſpel opens to you a door of hope; by it immortality is brought to light. Chriſt is the way, the truth, and the life. Though we have all deſtroyed ourſelves, there is help for us in him. He has honoured our nature by aſſuming it, the law by fulfilling it, and divine juſtice by ſatisfying all its demands; and he now invites every one that will, to come and to partake of the bleſſings of his ſalvation. An intereſt in this glorious Redeemer is the only antidote of death. Nothing leſs, nothing elſe will take away its ſting. Regeneration, by the powerful operations of the divine Spirit; repentance towards God; faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and a ready obedience to his holy will, are the certain effects and ſure proofs of your part in this ſalvation of God. Let not your preparations for death conſiſt only in vows and reſolutions; but walk with God, and give all poſſible diligence in this moſt important concern; for by ſinking into negligence and indifference, you will plant your dying bed with thorns. Work

while

while it is called to day, ſince the night cometh in which no man can work. The ſhades of night have already cloſed on our late valuable Friend. The iron hand of death has ſtilled the energies of life; and her dear remains we conſign to the dark, ſilent chambers of mortality. Becauſe her life was active, and uſefully employed, her diſſolution is the more ſeverely felt. The bleſſing of him that was ready to periſh came upon her, and often did ſhe cauſe the widow's heart to ſing for joy. She felt deeply for the miſeries of the indigent. For the houſe and worſhip of God ſhe cheriſhed the moſt ſacred regard, though diffidence, in reference to herſelf, held her back from ſome of its inſtitutions; a circumſtance which often occaſioned her much regret. During her illneſs, ſhe gave ſatisfactory proof of having taſted that the Lord is gracious, and that her ſoul was happily fixed on the Rock of ages.

Ye weeping, motherleſs children, and you, our honoured Brother, we ſympathize with you, and mingle our tears with yours; but let us not ſorrow as thoſe that have no hope. "For if we believe that Jeſus died and roſe again, even ſo them alſo which ſleep in Jeſus will God bring with him."

FINIS.

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